



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

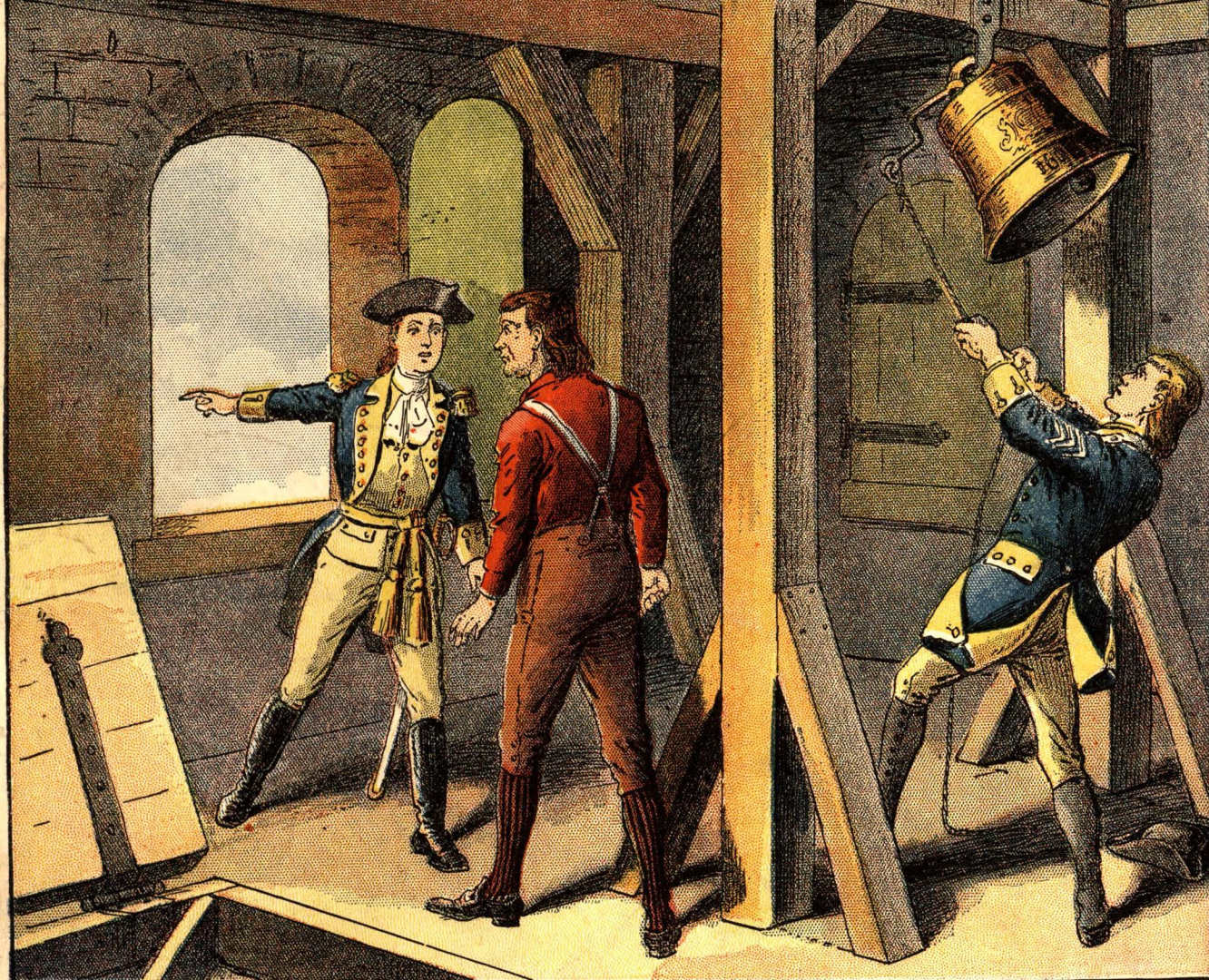
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No. 35.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 30, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' SIGNAL; OR "AT THE CLANG OF THE BELL." BY HARRY MOORE



As Bob grasped the rope and set the bell clanging, Dick pointed through the window and said to the bewildered bell ringer: "Look yonder; that is what we are doing this for."

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CHAPTER I.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" IN THE SOUTH.

"Look yonder, Dick!"

"Where, Bob?"

"Down yonder in that inlet."

"Ah! I see, Bob; there are some ships there."

"Yes, Dick, and men are disembarking from them. See, there are several boatloads of them coming ashore now."

"So there are, Bob; and—have you noticed the color of the men's uniform?"

"Yes, Dick—red."

"Which means that the men are——"

"Redcoats, Dick."

"You are right, Bob."

"What does it mean?"

"I don't know, but I can give a good guess."

"Well, what do you guess that it means?"

"I'll tell you, Bob, I should guess that those ships have brought a strong force of British soldiers from New York, and that the intention is to try to effect the capture of Savannah."

"By Jove! Dick, I believe you're right."

A couple of handsome youths, seemingly about eighteen or nineteen years of age, were the speakers.

The youths were mounted on fine-looking horses.

The horses were standing on a hill which overlooked the country for miles around.

To the eastward, however, and perhaps a mile distant, was the Atlantic Ocean.

The hill was perhaps three miles north of Savannah, Georgia, and a mile east of the Savannah River.

The two youths in question were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

They were members—and Dick was the captain—of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick and Bob had organized the company of "Liberty Boys" in 1776, and it was now the fall of 1778.

It had been more than two years since the "Liberty Boys" had joined the patriot army.

During that time the youths had made themselves fam-

ous by their reckless daring on the fields of battle and by their wonderful fighting abilities.

In addition, Dick and Bob had become famous as spies.

Dick, especially, had made a wonderful reputation as a spy.

He was known as the champion spy of the Revolution.

Whenever there was a difficult piece of work to be done, General Washington invariably selected Dick for the task.

If Dick needed a helper, he always selected Bob, as the two had known each other, and had been chums, all their lives.

At the time of which we write, the patriot forces in the South were commanded by General Robert Howe, who had his headquarters at Savannah.

There had been considerable trouble in South Carolina and Georgia—especially Georgia.

This State was overrun by the British.

Guerrilla parties composed of Tories and British soldiers from General Prevost's army in Florida destroyed scores of rice plantations in Georgia.

They pillaged and burned the houses, murdered the owners and carried off the negro slaves.

Affairs were indeed at sixes and sevens.

General Howe had sent a message to Washington, asking that assistance be sent him, and asking further for instructions regarding what course he should pursue.

General Washington at once wrote instructions, and giving the letter to Dick Slater, told him to take his "Liberty Boys" and go down into Georgia and do what he could to help General Howe and the patriot cause.

The "Liberty Boys" had set out at once, and when we introduced them to the reader they had penetrated to within a few miles of Savannah.

Dick and Bob were better mounted than their comrades and had ridden on ahead.

They had paused on the top of the hill to look around and wait for their comrades to overhaul them.

They did not have to wait long.

They had just finished the brief conversation, as given above, when the "Liberty Boys" rode up and joined them.

"Look yonder, boys!" said Bob, pointing. "What do you think of that?"

The youths all looked in the direction indicated.

"Redcoats!" exclaimed Mark Morrison, sententiously.

"You are right," agreed Dick; "and there must be a large force, too."

"Yes, indeed. What do you think it means?"

"I think it means that Savannah is to be attacked."

"It looks that way, sure enough."

"Then we are just in time!" cried Sam Sanderson, enthusiastically. "We'll get there in time to be in the fight."

"So we will," agreed Dick. "We will be in time to warn General Howe of the approach of the British, too, and he will be enabled to make preparations to receive them."

The "Liberty Boys" sat there and watched the scene below for some time.

Presently Dick dismounted.

"Hold my horse, Bob," he said, passing the halter-strap to his comrade.

"What are you going to do, Dick?" asked Bob, in surprise.

"I'm going to go down there, and see if I can find out how many there are of the redcoats, what their intentions are, and secure all the information possible, in fact."

"You'd better stay away, Dick."

"Why so?"

"You are likely to be seen and get captured or shot."

"I don't think there is much danger."

"But what is the use of risking going down there? We know what the redcoats intend to do. You yourself said a little while ago that they evidently intend to attack Savannah."

"I know, Bob; but there is nothing like being sure. And, then, it will be information of great value if I can learn how many there are of the British."

"Of course, that would help some. It makes it better when it is known how many men you have to fight against. But I don't see how you will find that out."

"I'll find a way."

Dick quickly doffed his suit of Continental blue.

He then drew an old, ragged suit of citizen's clothing out of one of his saddle-bags and donned it.

This changed his looks completely.

He looked like a rough, country youth.

"Do you think they will suspect that I am a patriot soldier, now?" he asked, with a smile.

"No, I guess not," replied Bob.

"All right; good-by, boys. Wait here till I come back."

Dick plunged down the hillside and quickly disappeared among the trees.

It was timber most of the way down to the bay in which the British ships lay.

Dick made his way along at a rapid pace.

Twenty minutes later Dick reached the shore of the bay.

He reached it at a point some little distance from where the British troops were landing.

He made his way slowly down toward this point.

Dick affected a clumsy, awkward style of walk and gawked about him in the style characteristic of a country youth who had never seen much of anything.

Dick approached to within a few feet of where a party of redcoats were standing.

Here he paused and stood gaping about.

Dick was a splendid actor.

He had good control of facial expression.

He could so change the lines of his face and could assume such a vacant, stupid look that it would have been difficult for any one who did not know him to believe that the youth was as keen, bright and alert a young fellow as ever lived.

Dick was playing a little game.

He wished to have the redcoats address him first.

Then he could enter into conversation with them without much danger of arousing their suspicion.

Dick's plan was successful.

The redcoats had taken note of Dick.

Naturally, they supposed he was a native of the region.

Presently one of the redcoats addressed Dick.

"Hello, young fellow!" he said.

Dick looked around at the fellow, with a vacant expression of countenance.

"Hullo!" he replied.

"Where did you come from?" the redcoat asked.

Dick jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Up'n ther timber."

"Up in the timber, eh?"

"Yep."

"Where do you live?"

"Up'n ther timber."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yep."

"What's your name?"

"Jim Bilkins."

"A very pretty name," sarcastically. "How old are you, Jim?"

"I dunno."

"Don't know how old you are?"

"Nope."

The soldiers laughed.

"Haven't you any idea how old you are?"

"Oh, I guess ez how't I'm erbout twelve yeers old."

The redcoats roared.

"Twelve years old—ha! ha! ha!"

"Say, he's a pretty good-sized fellow for his age, isn't he?"

"He is, for a fact."

Then the redcoats laughed again.

Dick maintained a sober expression.

The stupid, almost vacant look never left his face.

"Whut air you uns laffin' at?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," laughed the redcoat who had first addressed him.

"And that's almost the literal truth," added another, in a low tone of voice. "He's about as near nothing as anybody I ever saw."

Dick heard this, but gave no indication of the fact.

Instead, he asked a question.

"Who air all you uns?"

"Who are we?"

"Yep. Who air you uns?"

"We are British soldiers," was the reply, in a rather pompous tone of voice.

"British solgers?"

"Yes; soldiers of the king."

"Who's ther king?"

"Great guns, fellows!" the redcoat exclaimed, "did you hear that?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know who the king is?" another exclaimed.

"Never heard tell uv 'im," replied Dick.

"You never!"

"Nope. Whut is er king, ennyhow?"

The redcoats groaned.

"There's a sample of American intelligence," remarked one, scornfully.

"I would never have believed that we would find any one so ignorant," said another.

Dick, seemingly, paid no attention to the remarks that were made.

He was secretly amused.

He was well satisfied, also.

He had evidently succeeded in making them think he was a simpleton.

This being the case, the redcoats would not be afraid to speak out in his presence and tell their plans.

They certainly would not think that harm would come to them through him.

"Well, if you don't know what a king is," said the redcoat who had done most of the talking, "I don't know as it will be worth while for me to try to tell you. You've lived this long without knowing, and I guess it won't hurt you to travel the rest of the way in ignorance."

"Whut do solgers do?" asked Dick, calmly.

"What do soldiers do?"

"Yep, whut do they do?"

"They fight."

"Fight?"

"Yes."

"Who do they fight?"

"Oh, their enemies, of course; or almost anybody, in fact."

"Sho! Air you uns goin' ter fight eatch other?"

"Oh, no!"

"Who air you uns goin' ter fight, then?"

"The rebels."

"Who air they?"

"They are men who have taken up arms against the king."

"Oh! Air there enny rebels eroun' heer?"

"Oh, yes; lots of them."

"Whur?"

"Oh, all around here. There are a lot of them down at Savannah."

"Whur's Savanny?"

"Don't you know?" the redcoat asked, in surprise. "Have you never been there?"

"Nope, I've never been ennywhur."

"That's the truth, and I know it!" exclaimed one of the redcoats.

"That's right," from another; "I could swear to it."

"It's a self-evident fact," from still another.

Then the redcoats laughed.

"Savannah is only a few miles distant," said the redcoat who had done most of the talking. "There are lots of rebels there, and we are going to whip them and capture the city."

"Gee!" exclaimed Dick, his face showing more of eagerness and interest than it had yet done. "I'd like ter see thet fight."

"Would you?"

"Yep. Say, et'll be er big fight, won't et?"

"Yes, pretty big, I expect."

"How menny air there uv you uns?"

"Three thousand five hundred."

Dick's face took on a dazed look.

"Say, thet's an orful lot uv solgers, hain't et?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, it's quite a good many."

"When air you uns goin' ter fight them air rebels?"

"I don't know; to-morrow, though, I expect."

"Gee! I think I'll stay aroun' heer an' go with you uns. I wanter see thet fight."

The soldier smiled.

"The best thing you can do, if you want to see the fight," he said, "is to get up on a hill somewhere and climb to the top of the tallest tree you can find. If you were to go with us you would be in the fight and wouldn't get to see much of it."

At this instant, Dick, who, though seeming not to do so, saw everything, caught sight of a negro who had just emerged from the timber and was approaching another group of redcoats standing a short distance from the group Dick had been talking to.

Dick saw the negro walk up to one of the redcoats and say something to him.

The redcoat gave a start, and, turning, walked rapidly toward the group near which Dick was standing.

Dick's mind was active.

A keener, shrewder youth never lived.

Instinctively he understood matters.

The negro had doubtless discovered the presence of the "Liberty Boys" on the hill a mile distant, and had come and informed the redcoats of his discovery.

Dick realized that he was in danger.

The redcoats might suspect that he was a member of the party of horsemen that the negro had seen.

Indeed, Dick thought, judging by the rapid manner in which the redcoat was approaching and the eager look on his face, that he already suspected.

Dick did not wish to be captured.

The only way to prevent it would be by getting away from there, and quickly, too.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, Dick turned and ran swiftly toward the edge of the timber.

"Stop him!" yelled the approaching redcoat, excitedly. "He is a rebel spy! Don't let him get away! Shoot him! Kill him!"

CHAPTER II.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" IN SAVANNAH.

All was excitement at once.

The redcoats who had been talking to Dick could hardly believe that the youth was a spy, however.

They could hardly believe that he was other than he seemed to be—a green country youth, a simpleton who did not even know his own age.

The youth's action in running away, however, was suspicious

If he was the simple country youth he pretended to be, why should he fear?

This thought occurred to the redcoats and they started in pursuit of Dick.

"Stop!" they yelled. "Stop, or we will fire!"

At least a hundred of the redcoats joined in the chase.

They also joined in the yelling.

"Stop! stop!" was the cry. "Stop, or we will fill you full of lead!"

But Dick did not stop.

He had no thought of doing so.

Instead, he ran the faster.

It was not far to the edge of the timber.

If he could reach it and get safely in among the trees, he would be able to bid defiance to the redcoats.

Dick was an expert woodman.

Once in among the trees, and the entire British army could not have caught him.

Dick glanced back over his shoulder.

He saw that half a hundred, at least, of the redcoats held levelled pistols.

"They're going to fire," the youth thought. "I am well within pistol range, too. Jove! I hope they won't wound me sufficiently so that I will be unable to escape."

He glanced ahead.

The timber was yet twenty yards distant at least.

He could not possibly hope to reach it before the volley would be fired.

"Ready!" he heard a voice cry.

"They are going to fire," thought Dick.

"Fire!"

The voice rang out loud and clear.

Dick threw himself forward upon his face.

Crash! Roar!

The redcoats had fired at the same instant, seemingly, that Dick had fallen.

Dick had gone down an instant ahead of the redcoats' shots, however, and the bullets had whistled harmlessly above him.

The redcoats thought they had killed Dick, however, and sent up a shout of triumph.

It was short-lived.

To their surprise and chagrin, the supposed dead youth leaped to his feet and ran onward with the speed of the wind.

Dick had reached and disappeared within the timber before the redcoats recovered from their astonishment.

They rushed forward in pursuit of the youth.

They entered the timber and tried to follow Dick, but soon saw that they could not do so.

They had lost sight of Dick completely.
Nor did they catch sight of him again.
They did not penetrate very far into the timber.
Realizing that they could not hope to overtake the fleet-footed youth, they gave up the chase.

Dick hastened onward through the timber.
Fifteen minutes later he was back among his "Liberty Boys."

"What was the excitement down there about, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Did they find out who you were?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Were they shooting at you?" from Sam Sanderson.

"Yes," replied Dick, "they were shooting at me."

Then he went ahead and told them all about it.

"Say, I told you fellows I saw a nigger down there in the brush!" exclaimed Bob. "You fellows said I was mistaken, but I knew I wasn't."

"We'll have to acknowledge that you were right about it, Bob," agreed Mark Morrison.

"Oh, I tell you, when I say I see a thing, I do see it," said Bob. "You may depend on that every time."

"All right; we'll believe you next time."

"Come, fellows, let's be going," said Dick. "Those red-coats might take it into their heads to come up here and try to capture us."

Mounting his horse, Dick led the way and the party of "Liberty Boys" rode onward in a southerly direction.

"How far do you suppose it is to Savannah, Dick?" asked Bob, as they rode along.

"I don't know. Three or four miles, I suppose. The last time we asked, the man said it was six miles to Savannah, and we have come two or three miles since then."

Half an hour later the party came to a river.

"What stream is this?" asked Bob.

"It must be the Savannah River," replied Dick.

"And is that Savannah, across yonder?" asked Bob, pointing across the stream.

"That is undoubtedly Savannah, Bob."

"How are we to get over there?"

"By way of the ford."

"The ford?"

"Yes."

"Where is there a ford?"

"About a mile up the river; we struck the stream too low down."

"How do you know there's a ford up there?"

"General Howe said so in the letter which he wrote to General Washington."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, let's get up to the ford, then, and cross the river."

"All right. Forward, boys!"

Dick turned his horse's head up stream, and led the way in that direction.

It did not take long to reach the ford.

The river was quite wide, but very shallow at this point.

The "Liberty Boys" rode into the water without hesitation.

A few minutes later they were on the other side of the river and riding eastward toward Savannah.

Ten minutes later they rode into the suburbs of Savannah.

The youths looked about them with interest.

Savannah was, even at that date, a very beautiful city.

"It would be too bad to let this city fall into the hands of the British," said Bob.

"So it would," agreed Dick.

Dick made a few inquiries and was not long in finding General Robert Howe's headquarters.

Dick entered headquarters at once.

He was shown into the room occupied by General Howe.

The general eyed Dick, eagerly.

"You are Dick Slater?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"And you have come from the commander-in-chief?"

"I have."

"Did General Washington send me a message?"

"Yes, sir, here it is."

Dick drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to General Howe.

The latter took the letter, eagerly.

"Excuse me while I read it," he said.

General Howe opened the letter and read its contents.

"The commander-in-chief says, in here, that he sends me a company of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' He speaks very highly of them. Did they come with you?"

"Yes, sir; they are outside now."

"Good!" exclaimed General Howe. "I have need of recruits, I assure you."

"Indeed, you have," said Dick. "You have need of recruits even more than you know."

Dick's tone was so significant as to attract General Howe's notice.

He looked at Dick, inquiringly.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that you are to be attacked to-morrow."

General Howe was astonished.

"I am to be attacked?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By the British."

"By the British?"

"Yes."

"What British? Where are there any British?"

"There are three thousand five hundred British troops within three miles of Savannah at this moment," said Dick.

"Impossible!" exclaimed General Howe.

"Not at all," replied Dick. "I saw them myself."

"You saw them?"

General Howe was becoming excited.

"Yes, sir. They are disembarking from British warships at a point three miles north of Savannah."

General Howe turned pale.

"How do you know there are three thousand five hundred of them?" he asked.

"One of the redcoats told me so. I went down to where they were, in disguise, and had a talk with some of them."

General Howe almost groaned.

"This is indeed very serious," he said. "I fear we shall be unable to hold the city."

"How many men have you?" asked Dick.

"Twelve hundred."

"And my 'Liberty Boys' make it thirteen hundred; even then, however, we have but little more than one-third as many men as the British."

"True," said General Howe. "There is one thing in our favor, however."

"What is that?"

"They can only attack us from the front; that is to say, from the west. On the north side of the city is the river, and on the east and south is a swamp, through which they could not penetrate."

"Perhaps we may be able to hold them off, then," said Dick.

"Perhaps so. I believe it will be best to make the attempt, anyway, don't you?"

"I do."

"Very well, we will defend the city."

"It is the best thing that can be done, I think," said Dick.

Preparations were at once begun for the battle, which all felt sure would take place on the morrow.

CHAPTER III.

DICK RETURNS TO SAVANNAH.

Two days have passed.

In a little opening in the timber on the bank of the Sa-

vannah River, at a point three miles from Savannah, a party of about one hundred and fifty patriot soldiers were encamped.

The majority of these soldiers were youths of from eighteen to twenty years of age.

They were, in fact, "The Liberty Boys of '76."

There were perhaps forty older men.

A number of the "Liberty Boys" and also of the older soldiers were wounded.

As had been expected, the British had attacked Savannah the day before.

As will be remembered, General Robert Howe, commander of the patriot force at Savannah, had told Dick that the British could attack only from the front, as there was a swamp behind the city through which it would be impossible for the British to pass.

In this he had been mistaken, however.

There was a path through the swamp and a large force of the British had been guided through the swamp by a negro who knew the way well.

The result had been that the patriot force, attacked both at the front and in the rear at the same time, was completely demoralized.

At least half of the twelve hundred men under Howe were militia.

They had never been under fire and they fled at once.

This left only about six or seven hundred, and they could do nothing against five times their number.

They were quickly routed, and about five hundred of their number were captured.

Dick Slater and the majority of his "Liberty Boys," together with about forty other patriot soldiers, had succeeded, by dint of desperate fighting, in cutting their way through the British and escaping.

Dick, with rare foresight, had ordered that their horses be saddled and bridled and ready for instant use before the battle commenced, and when he saw how things were going, and realized that it would be impossible to hold the city, he gave the order to mount and charge.

The "Liberty Boys" obeyed, and with pistol in one hand and saber in the other they shot and cut their way through the British.

They had made such a lane through the ranks of the redcoats that, as we have said, about forty of the patriot soldiers succeeded in following them through.

The party had made its way up the river and had encamped at the point at which we now find them.

Dick Slater was feeling pretty blue.

Five of the "Liberty Boys" were missing.

Among these were Bob Estabrook and Mark Morrison.

Dick called a council.

He told his men that he did not intend to leave the vicinity until he had learned the fate of each and every one of the missing "Liberty Boys."

"I'm going to find out whether or not they have been killed," he said. "If they have been killed, it cannot be helped; but if they have been made prisoners, I am going to rescue them if such a thing is possible."

"How are you going to find out, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"I'm going to go down into Savannah and stay there till I do find out, Sam."

"I don't see how you will go about finding out."

"Neither do I; that is to say, I have no definite idea. I shall simply be governed by circumstances. I think I will be able to find out what I wish to know, however."

"I hope so."

"So do I."

Dick made arrangements to start for Savannah as soon as evening should come.

He placed Sam in command at the encampment and told him to see to it that they were not surprised by the British and captured.

"I'll keep sentinels out all the time, Dick," Sam replied; "the redcoats will not catch us napping."

Dick left the camp at about sundown.

It would take him an hour to walk to Savannah.

It would be dark when he arrived there.

This was what he wished.

Dick was disguised in the old suit of citizen's clothing which he had worn three days before when he had gone down to where the redcoats were landing from the warships.

He did not think there was much danger that his disguise would be penetrated.

Especially would this be the case in the night-time.

With a few last words of caution to the "Liberty Boys," Dick left the encampment and made his way in the direction of Savannah.

There was no regular road, so he followed the river.

The stream crooked and turned somewhat, and in following it Dick would have to walk farther, but he would be in no danger of losing his way.

It took Dick nearly an hour and a half to reach Savannah.

It was quite dark when he got there.

This was to his advantage.

It made it easy for him to dodge sentinels which had been posted at the end of each street leading down into the city.

As he had expected, Dick found the streets thronged with redcoats.

As was natural, the British soldiers were feeling good over the easy manner in which they had captured the city.

They were drinking and having a good time, generally.

Dick managed to listen to the talk of a good many of the redcoats.

He was in hopes that he might hear them say something regarding the prisoners which had been taken the day before.

He was disappointed in this respect.

None of the redcoats whom he heard talking said anything about the prisoners.

Dick made up his mind that if he was to find out what he wished to know he would have to make inquiries.

This would be dangerous, however.

It would likely arouse suspicion.

Presently Dick met a couple of redcoats who were so drunk they could hardly walk.

The two had hold of each other and were lurching first one way and then the other.

They took up nearly the whole of the sidewalk.

Just as they reached Dick, both happened to lurch the same way at the same time.

They would have fallen but for Dick.

He leaped forward, and, catching hold of the fellows, held them up.

"Steady, comrades," he said. "First thing you know, you will be down in the gutter."

"Zash right, by Jove!" mumbled one. "Funniest shide-walk I ever shaw. Bloomin' thing goes up'n down'n roun'n, roun'n shideways, by Jove! Makes it pretty hard for gen'l'm'n t' walk straight."

"That's right," agreed Dick, "things do seem sort of topsy-turvy, sure enough."

"Shay, come 'long with us, comrade," said the other redcoat. "We're (hie) goin' to have a good time. Come 'long, thash a good feller."

An idea struck Dick.

These two redcoats were so drunk that they would not suspect anything if he asked questions, yet at the same time they were not so drunk but what they could answer questions.

Dick thought that by cultivating their acquaintance he might be able to learn something regarding the prisoners.

He decided to go along with them.

"All right," he said, "I'll go with you. I don't mind having a good time myself."

"Thash a good feller," mumbled the other redcoat. "You're all ri'."

The redcoats, with commendable judgment, let go of each other and each seized one of Dick's arms.

They seemed to know that this would give them greater security than they would enjoy by holding to each other.

It was the instinct which seems to abide with drunken men when the fumes of liquor has smothered the reasoning faculties.

The three made their way slowly down the street.

It was a queer-looking trio.

Dick feared that he might attract too much attention on account of the fact that he was dressed in citizen's clothing.

As no one seemed to give them more than a passing glance, however, his equanimity was restored.

Doubtless those who saw them thought that all three were drunk.

Presently they came to a saloon.

The redcoats both stopped.

"Lesh go in here," said one. "Nice plaish."

"Zash ri'," from the other. "Been here b'fore."

This suited Dick first-rate.

He wished to ask the fellows some questions and could not very well do so on the street.

If he could get them seated at a table in the saloon, he would be able to talk to them.

Dick managed to get the two drunken redcoats through the doorway and into the saloon.

Dick glanced around.

In one corner was a table.

He led the two men across to this table and assisted them to get seated.

Then Dick took a seat.

He called a waiter and ordered wine for three.

The waiter brought the wine and the redcoats drank eagerly.

This put them in a splendid humor.

They started in to sing a song, and insisted on Dick joining them.

Dick did not care about singing.

Neither did he care about hearing them sing.

He would much rather hear them talk.

Finally he got them quieted down and engaged them in conversation.

Dick knew how to approach the redcoats.

He appealed to their vanity.

"British soldiers are the bravest and best in the world, are they not?" he asked.

"Zash whash they are."

"Zash ri'."

Of course Dick expected them to say this.

"It was a great victory they won here yesterday, wasn't it?"

"Yesh, big vict'ry."

"Zash ri'."

"I understand you captured a lot of the rebels. Is that a fact?"

"Yesh, zash a fac'."

"Zash ri'."

"How many prisoners did you capture?"

"Dunno. Five er six hun'ed, I guess."

The other redcoat nodded.

"Zash ri'," he coincided, gravely.

Dick was working around to the point he wished to reach.

"What did you do with the prisoners?" he asked. "Where are they?"

"Zey on ship."

"On a ship!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yesh, on ship—on prishun ship."

"Zash ri'."

Dick was sure he understood matters now.

Instead of putting the prisoners in a building in the city the redcoats had taken them and placed them on board a ship.

"Where is the prison ship?" asked Dick.

"Out in harbor."

"Zash ri'."

"Are all the ships out in the harbor?" asked Dick. "Or is just the prison ship there?"

"All ships out in harbor."

"Zash ri'."

The redcoat looked wise as an owl.

Dick knew that the two men were so drunk that they would not suspect anything, so he said:

"I expect to go aboard the prison ship pretty soon. How am I to tell which is the prison ship?"

"Prishun ship lies clesh in shore," the redcoat replied. "You can tell it zash way."

"Zash ri'."

Dick had learned just what he wished to know.

There was no need of his fooling away any more time with the two drunken redcoats.

He wished to get away from them as quickly as possible.

He knew how to accomplish his purpose.

He ordered a fresh supply of wine.

Then while the two redcoats were drinking, he rose from the table and said: "I will be back in a few moments, comrades," and made his way out of the saloon.

Dick had succeeded better than he had expected.

He had found out where the prisoners were.

He was disappointed to learn that they were on board a ship, however.

This would make them harder to get at.

It would make it much more difficult to effect their rescue.

The prospect did not daunt the brave youth, however.

He would find a way to get aboard the prison ship; and once aboard, he would find a way to assist the prisoners to escape, if such a thing was possible.

Dick hastened down the street in the direction of the water front.

A few minutes later he was at the wharf.

At the point where he reached the wharf, a boat rested on the water.

In the boat were two men.

There were no lights near, but it was not so dark but what Dick could see this.

He could make out, also, that the boat was well filled with packages and boxes.

"Hello, there!" said one of the men, in a gruff voice. "D'ye want a job?"

"That depends on what the job is," replied Dick.

"Thar hain't much work to et. All I want is fur ye ter go out ter a ship with us and he'p git these packages and boxes aboard."

"Where's the ship?"

"Jest out heer a leetle ways."

A sudden thought came to Dick.

"Is it the prison ship?" he asked, in a tone of affected carelessness.

"Yaas; an' this is grub fur ther prisoners. But thet's neether heer nur thar; will ye go 'long with us or not?"

"Yes, I'll go; I haven't anything else to do at present."

"Jump in heer, then."

Dick did so.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE PRISON SHIP.

One of the men pushed the boat off and the other rowed.

The boat's head was turned out into the bay, and a few minutes later the dark outlines of a large vessel was seen in front of the boat.

A few moments later the boat came to a stop at the side of the ship.

"Hello, ther ship!" roared the stentorian voice of the man who had addressed Dick at the wharf.

A reply came from the ship's deck.

A man appeared at the rail and looked down.

"Hello, yourself! What's wanted?"

"Here's ther grub fur ther pris'ners. Whar do yer want et?"

"Right up here."

"All right! hev ye got er rope?"

"A rope?"

"Yaas; ye'll hev ter haul ther stuff up."

"Humph! How many of you are there down there?"

"Three uv us."

"Good! Send two of them up to do the hauling. I'm not going to break my back lifting boxes of grub for rebels that ought to be hung or shot."

"All right; down with yer ladder."

"Here you are."

There was a little splash.

Something struck the water between the boat and the vessel.

It was a rope ladder.

"Up with ye, Jim," ordered the man; "an' ye, too, young feller!" this to Dick.

The man climbed the ladder, Dick following closely.

They were soon on the deck of the ship.

The man brought them a rope.

"There's your rope," he said. "Now haul the stuff up."

The two went to work.

They lowered the rope to the man in the boat.

He made it fast to one of the packages.

"All ready!" he cried. "Hoist!"

Dick and his companion lifted the package and deposited it on the deck.

They loosened the rope and lowered it again.

They lifted another package and deposited it on the deck.

This they did, again and again.

At last the boat was empty.

"Now carry the packages down into the galley," the man on the deck ordered; "I'll show you the way."

Dick had used his eyes while working.

He had seen everything there was to see.

There was a sentinel at the stern and one at the bow.

The man who had greeted them when they first arrived was undoubtedly in charge of the deck.

This man led the way down into what he had termed the galley.

This was the cabin where the cooking was done.

He showed Dick and the other men where to place the packages.

There was no one in the galley.

Dick judged that the cooks had gone ashore.

He wondered where the prisoners were.

Once or twice he thought he heard the murmur of voices.

He was not sure of this, however.

Dick worked steadily until all the packages and boxes had been carried down into the galley.

While working, he had been thinking.

He did not wish to return to the shore in the boat.

He wished to stay on board the ship.

He hardly knew how to accomplish this.

Dick presently thought of a plan.

When they returned to the boat, he made a mis-step, purposely, and plunged headlong into the water.

He gave utterance to a cry of simulated fear, as he did so.

There was not the least danger of Dick drowning.

He could swim like a fish.

But, of course, the two men in the boat did not know this.

They gave utterance to cries of fright and excitement.

Their cries brought the man on deck to the rail of the ship.

"What's the matter down there?" he asked.

"Thet young fool fell out uv ther boat," was the reply.

"I don't know whether he kin swim er not. Keep er sharp lookout for him, Jim."

"All right."

They remained where they were and watched for Dick to reappear, for two or three minutes.

Dick did not reappear.

"He must hev hit his head against the side uv ther ship," said the one addressed as Jim.

"I jedge yer right, Jim," from the other. "He's likely down at ther bottom uv ther bay now."

"I 'spect so."

"Waal, we kain't stay heer all night. Ther feller's drowned an' thet's the end uv 'im. We'll go ershore."

He took up the oars and rowed slowly away.

Meanwhile, what of Dick?

He had purposely struck the water with considerable force.

He went under to a considerable distance.

He swam directly away from the boat, but alongside the ship.

He swam forty or fifty feet before coming to the surface.

He was out of range of vision of the two men in the boat when he came up.

He heard what the men said.

Feeling secure, he remained where he was.

He waited until the boat had gone away.

Then he swam slowly and carefully back along the side of the ship.

Presently he came to the rope ladder.

Dick feared that the man would draw this aboard as soon as the boat left.

For some reason he had not done so.

Dick was glad of this.

He wished to use the ladder.

He caught hold of it and pulled himself up out of the water.

Dick started to climb the ladder and then hesitated.

What if the man should come to draw the ladder up while he was on it?

Dick decided to take the chances, however.

Should this occur, he could leap back down into the water.

He was determined to get aboard the ship.

He was willing to take almost any chances.

He climbed up the ladder as rapidly as he could without making any noise.

When he got up high enough so he could look over the edge of the deck he paused.

He took a survey of the deck.

He could hear the measured tramp, tramp of the feet of the sentinels at the bow and stern of the ship, but he could see nothing of the man whom he had seen when he was on the ship before.

"He has probably gone down into the cabin," thought Dick. "Good! I'll hurry and get aboard while the coast is clear."

Dick climbed over the railing and made his way toward the cabin.

He had almost reached the cabin when he heard a noise in the direction of the galley.

"Perhaps he is feeding the prisoners," thought Dick. "I'll see."

Dick tiptoed to the door of the galley.

The door was open a few inches.

Dick peered in through the opening.

The man was there.

When Dick was helping carry the packages into the galley, he had noticed a door at one side.

This door was now open.

The murmur of voices came up through the opening.

The youth's heart leaped.

"The prisoners are down there," he thought. "Ah, if I can only free them!"

Dick was a brave and determined youth.

He believed that if he could overcome the redcoat and get down to where the prisoners were, he could free them.

Then there would be little difficulty in making their escape.

When Dick's eyes rested upon the redcoat, the man had one of the packages in his hand and was going toward the opening.

He disappeared through the opening and Dick heard

the sound of his footsteps on what was evidently a series of steps leading down into the hold.

Dick pushed the door open and stepped into the galley.

Then he closed the door and bolted it.

"There!" he said to himself, "I wish to have an uninterrupted interview with that redcoat, and now I think I shall be able to do so."

Dick stole forward and looked through the opening.

What he saw caused his heart to give a throb of pity.

The prisoners were there, sure enough.

The hold was filled with them.

The redcoat was down among the prisoners, feeding them.

The hands of the prisoners were free, but their legs were bound.

Dick noted that the redcoat was careful to keep out of reach of the prisoners.

On looking closer, Dick saw that only about a dozen had been given anything to eat.

"He's just beginning to feed them," thought Dick. "I wish I could wait until he has finished, but I can't; time is precious."

When the redcoat had distributed all the food the package contained, he turned and started back toward the steps leading up to the galley.

"He is coming!" said Dick to himself. "Now for it! I must be careful not to let him make noise sufficient to be heard by the sentinels."

Dick drew back to one side of the opening and waited.

Presently the footsteps of the redcoat were heard on the stairs.

Closer and closer came the footsteps.

The man was almost at the top of the stairs.

In another moment he would step through the opening.

Dick drew himself together and waited.

He crouched ready to spring upon the redcoat the instant he should appear.

The redcoat stepped through the opening and into the galley.

As he did so his eyes fell upon Dick.

He opened his mouth to give utterance to a cry.

He did not utter it.

He did not have time.

Dick bounded forward, with the leap of a panther, and as quickly, almost, as a flash of lightning.

He seized the startled redcoat by the throat with both hands.

Dick's steel-like fingers compressed the redcoat's throat so suddenly, fiercely and strongly that the fellow could not utter a sound.

Although taken at a disadvantage, the redcoat began to struggle with Dick.

Doubtless he recognized Dick as being the young fellow who had helped unload the packages from the boat and carry them into the galley, and who, so it was supposed, had fallen out of the boat and been drowned.

The redcoat no doubt realized that he was in great danger.

At any rate, he struggled fiercely, desperately.

The redcoat was a big fellow.

He was strong and powerful.

Had Dick not succeeded in taking him by surprise, and at a disadvantage, he would, no doubt, have had hard work overcoming him.

As it was, it proved to be no easy task.

The redcoat fought desperately and did his best to get Dick's hands loose from his throat.

He pulled at the youth's wrists and did all he could to make Dick loosen his grip.

To no avail.

He could not do it.

Dick held on with grim determination.

He knew the value of the hold which he had secured.

He had proven its deadliness on more than one occasion.

Finding that he could not break Dick's hold, and realizing that unless he did something quickly he would be rendered unconscious, the redcoat attempted to secure the same hold upon Dick.

Dick would not permit this, however.

He foiled the redcoat's every attempt.

The man grew red in the face.

He gasped and gurgled.

Redder and redder his face grew.

The veins stood out on his face and neck like whipcords.

His face grew almost black.

The redcoat evidently realized that he could do nothing.

Suddenly he gave vent to a gasping groan, his knees gave way and he sank to the floor, unconscious.

At the same instant there came a loud knock at the galley door.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE FROM THE PRISON SHIP.

Dick was startled.

He hardly knew what to do.

He wondered who was at the door.

"It must be one of the sentinels," he judged.

But what could the fellow want?

Dick decided that the best thing he could do would be to maintain silence.

He decided to go ahead with his work.

He did not believe the sentinel would break the door down.

Stooping, Dick lifted the insensible redcoat, and, carrying him in his arms, passed through the opening and down the steps leading into the hold.

At the bottom of the steps was a lighted lantern.

It lighted up the hold for a distance of several yards in each direction.

Dick placed the insensible man on the floor of the hold.

Then he raised up and looked around.

As he did so he heard an exclamation.

"Dick!" a voice cried.

Dick whirled and looked in the direction from which the voice sounded.

"Bob!" he exclaimed. "Thank goodness you are alive, old man. I feared you were dead."

"Oh, the redcoats can't kill me, Dick. I'm all right, and here is Mark, too. But how did you get here?"

"I haven't time to tell you now, Bob. I'll do that later."

Dick stepped forward and cut the ropes which bound Bob and Mark.

"Good!" exclaimed Bob. "We'll get away from the redcoats yet."

Dick moved about among the prisoners and cut the ropes binding them, as rapidly as possible.

The men were wild with delight at the thought of making their escape.

Dick warned them that there was a chance that they might not be able to escape.

"The sentinels on deck may find out what is going on," he said, "and give the alarm; in that case, we may reach the deck only to be shot down."

"We'll risk it," was the general reply; "better a quick death than a lingering one in here."

It took Dick nearly half an hour to cut the bonds of all the prisoners.

While thus engaged, the sound of hurrying footsteps could be heard on the deck above.

Dick listened to the sound with some misgivings.

He believed that the sentinels had become suspicious that all was not right down in the hold.

Undoubtedly it was one of the sentinels who had knocked on the galley door.

Having received no answer to his knock, he had doubtless become suspicious.

If the sentinels had given the alarm there would be serious trouble when the prisoners appeared on the deck.

Doubtless the deck would be covered with redcoats, armed to the teeth.

But no matter.

Dick was determined that the attempt to escape should be made.

He told the men what might be expected, but they were willing to take their chances.

"We'll risk it," they said; "we'll run the gantlet, and if we can get through the crowd of redcoats and leap overboard we will be able to swim ashore."

The redcoat whom Dick had overpowered had recovered consciousness long before Dick finished freeing the prisoners, but Bob and Mark bound him hand and foot, and gagged him, and he was unable to call out.

When at last all the prisoners were freed from their bonds, Dick told them to follow him.

"We will escape, or die trying!" he said, grimly; and this statement met with the approval of all.

"You lead the way," they said, "and we will follow you to freedom or to death!"

"All right," replied Dick; "come along, everybody."

He led the way up the steps leading to the galley.

He had instructed the men in regard to his plans.

"We will have to move quickly," he had told them.

"When we get into the galley I will unbolt the door and then we will rush out and try to get across the deck and leap overboard. You must all follow me with all possible swiftness."

The men had promised that they would do so.

Dick, Bob and Mark took the lead and made their way up the steps and into the galley.

Behind them came the patriot soldiers.

Dick waited till the galley was filled with men.

Then he cautiously unbolted the galley door.

He jerked the door suddenly open.

He had intended to leap through the doorway the instant the door was open and make a dash for freedom, but for once Dick had to change his plans.

In front of the open doorway were a score of bristling bayonets.

To leap forward would be to impale himself on the bayonet points.

It would have been suicide to attempt to get through the doorway.

Bob, Mark and the patriot soldiers stared in consternation.

"Back!" cried one of the redcoats. "Back into the hold, you scoundrels! You'll not escape to-night!"

Dick slammed the door shut and bolted it in a twinkling. "Back!" he cried. "Down into the hold as quick as possible. Those scoundrels may fire through the door!" "Open that door!" roared a voice from outside the cabin. "Open it instantly!" But Dick made no motion toward doing so. The patriot soldiers hastened through the opening and back down into the hold, with all possible speed. Dick was the last to leave the galley. He closed the door, and finding a bolt on the side next to him, pushed it into its socket. "We will keep the redcoats at bay as long as possible," he thought. "Perhaps we may be able to find some way of getting out of the hold other than by way of the galley." He made his way down into the hold. Dick seized the lantern and hastened to make a survey of the hold. Away at the bow end of the hold he found an open port hole. He called to the soldiers. "This way!" he cried, in a cautious tone. "We may be able to make our escape yet." A box was found and placed under the port hole. Dick climbed on top of the box and looked out. Evidently the redcoats expected the prisoners to try to make their escape by way of the port hole, for at a point immediately underneath, the water was lighted up by the rays from a lantern or lanterns. "We will take our lives in our hands in attempting to leap out through the port hole," Dick said, "but I am in for risking it. What do the rest of you say?" "We are in for it!" was the general cry. "Anything is better than staying here." "All right, then; follow me with as much rapidity as possible, so as to disconcert the redcoats and not give them time to take aim. They may kill or wound some of us, but I think that the majority will be able to escape." "Go ahead, Dick," urged Bob, "I'll be right behind you." "And I'll come right behind Bob," said Mark Morrison. "We'll follow you," the patriots said; "we'll keep that port hole hot! Go ahead." There were a couple of iron pegs in the side of the ship just above the port hole. Seizing hold of these Dick pulled himself up and quickly sticking his legs through the port hole he forced his body down through, and, letting go all holds, shot quickly down toward the water. As he did so, crack! crack! crack! sounded the musket shots. The redcoats had fired upon him.

Splash! Dick struck the water and went out of sight. Luckily he had not been struck by any of the bullets. Dick dived on down as deep as was possible and swam away underneath the water. Scarcely had he disappeared beneath the surface of the water when down from the port hole shot another human form. It was that of Bob. Crack! crack! crack! The redcoats had fired upon Bob. The youth dived down deep and swam away underneath the water, as Dick had done. Another form shot down from the port hole. It was that of Mark Morrison. The redcoats fired upon Mark as they had upon Dick and Bob. One of the bullets wounded Mark slightly. It was not enough to cause him much inconvenience, however. The patriot soldiers followed the example set by the youths. They leaped out through the port hole, one after another. The redcoats kept firing and occasionally one of the escaping prisoners was hit by some of the bullets. This did not deter the rest from making the leap, however. Suddenly they heard a crashing sound. It sounded in the direction of the galley. The patriots knew what this meant. The redcoats had burst down the door leading into the galley. Suddenly there was another crash. The redcoats had burst down the door opening upon the steps leading down into the hold. Dick had anticipated this move of the enemy. He had told the patriots what to do in case the redcoats did do this. They remembered his instructions. "Stop where you are!" one of them cried, addressing the redcoats in the doorway above. "We have one of your number here in our power, and if you start to come down those steps we will kill him!" Exclamations of consternation escaped the redcoats' lips. They saw that the patriot spoke truly. They realized that the prisoners were desperate and that they would do what they said they would. They knew that if they started down the steps they would seal the death-warrant of their comrade. They did not wish to do this, of course.

They stood irresolute.

They did not know what to do.

Meanwhile the prisoners were leaping out through the port hole with great rapidity.

The sound of the firing had attracted attention by this time.

The water front was crowded with people.

Redcoats by the score leaped into boats and rowed out to the prison ship.

Soon a dozen boats were at the side of the ship at a point almost directly underneath the port hole.

Many of the redcoats had their muskets and they held them with bayonets up so that any one leaping from the port hole would be impaled upon the bayonet points.

No more patriots leaped through the port hole.

It would have been suicide to do so.

Before this, however, nearly a hundred of the patriots had leaped through the port hole.

Of these, at least seventy-five had escaped the bullets of the redcoats and were swimming away in an attempt to reach the shore.

Realizing that they would not dare land anywhere near the city front, the patriots swam down stream with the intention of landing below the city.

True, it was swamp down there, but it was the best they could do.

Dick, Bob and Mark succeeded in getting together soon after leaving the vicinity of the prison ship.

As they were the first to escape, the firing of the redcoats had not yet attracted a crowd to the water front, so the youths headed straight in toward the city.

As they neared the shore they saw people running down to the wharf, however, and they headed down stream.

They kept on swimming and watched for a chance to land at a point where they would not be apt to attract attention.

"Do you think all the men will be able to escape, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I'm afraid not, Bob; you see the firing will attract attention and the redcoats will go off to the ship in boats and that will put a stop to the men leaping through the port hole.

"I'm afraid you are right, Dick. Some of them will get away, though."

"Yes, a good many of them."

The youths swam onward, with strong strokes.

The current favored them and they moved through the water rapidly.

They were soon well down toward the lower end of the city.

"I believe it will be safe to go ashore, boys," said Dick. "Everything seems quiet down here."

"So it does," agreed Bob. "Well, I'm willing to risk going ashore."

"And I," said Mark.

"Come on," said Dick.

He headed in toward the shore.

Bob and Mark followed him closely.

It did not take long to reach the shore.

There was no wharf at this point—merely the sloping shore of the river.

The youths struck shallow water and waded ashore.

A wide street ran along the side of the river.

The youths stepped out of the water and crossed this street.

They made their way to the nearest street leading away from the river and started to enter it.

The street was dark, there being no lamp-posts or lights of any kind.

As the youths started to enter the street, they were treated to an unwelcome surprise.

"Halt!" cried a loud, threatening voice. "Halt, and surrender, or you are dead men!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT ON THE STREET.

The youths halted.

The youths had no intention of surrendering, however.

They had already taken many chances.

They were ready and willing to take more.

They whirled and bounded away down the street.

"Fire!" roared a voice.

Crack! crack! crack!

Several musket shots rang out.

The action of the youths had been so sudden, however, and it was so dark that the redcoats could not take aim, so the bullets did no damage.

The youths ran along the river front to the next street and turned up it.

They kept on running until they had gone three or four blocks.

Then they slowed down to a walk.

The sound of firing out on the river still came to their ears.

"The men are still leaping out through the port hole," said Bob. "Jove! I wish that all of them could get out."

"So do I," said Dick.

"And I," from Mark.

The youths were, of course, soaking wet.

Knowing that they would attract attention if seen, they kept on the darkest streets.

They walked onward till they came to the main street.

This street was lighted, there being lamp-posts at every corner.

The youths wished to cross this street, but were afraid they would attract attention.

The firing out on the river had aroused the city by this time.

The majority of the people did not as yet know what the firing was about, of course, but if they were to see the three water-soaked youths they would suspect that they were mixed up in the affair some way, and would, no doubt, try to capture them.

Dick decided to try to get across the street.

"Follow me closely, boys," he said; "we will cross the street and risk it."

"Go ahead, Dick," said Bob.

Dick led the way.

The three walked rapidly and were soon halfway across the street.

They had attracted the attention of a number of people, but no one seemed to think it necessary that they should be interfered with.

As they were approaching the other side of the street, however, eight or ten redcoats emerged from a saloon.

As might have been expected, the redcoats were at least half drunk.

In all probability they had not heard the firing out on the river.

Doubtless they did not know that anything unusual was going on.

They caught sight of the three youths, however.

The wet, bedraggled appearance of the youths attracted their attention.

"Hello, fellows!" cried one. "Look there, coming across the street. Here's some fellows that have been in bathing, judging by the looks of them."

Then they got directly in front of the youth.

Dick saw that the fellows were half drunk and feared that they would have trouble with them.

"Get out of the way!" he ordered. "We are in a hurry."

The redcoats laughed, hoarsely.

"Oh, you're in a hurry, are you?" cried one.

"Yes; get out of the way."

The redcoats laughed again.

"Oh, you mustn't be in such a hurry," another said. "We wish to have a talk with you."

"We haven't any time to talk."

"Haven't you?"

"No; nor inclination, either."

"Is that so?" this in a sneering tone.

"Yes, that's so. Step aside."

"We will—when we get ready."

"Let's not stand any more of their nonsense, Dick," said Bob, in a low tone.

Bob was a hot-blooded youth who was never willing to take much off of any one.

He believed in striking first and explaining afterward.

Dick was more conservative and cautious.

He usually avoided trouble if it were possible to do so.

He did not wish to become embroiled with these half-drunken redcoats if he could help it.

So he made a gesture for Bob to keep silent, and then again addressed himself to the redcoats.

"Gentlemen," he said, "please step aside and let us pass. We are in a great hurry."

"Ho! ho! He calls us gentlemen!" cried one of the redcoats. "We must let them pass sure, now. Such politeness must not go unrewarded."

The fellow's tone was sarcastic, however.

It was evident that he did not mean what he said.

Just then the sound of firing was heard.

The redcoats were not so drunk but what they realized that the firing was something out of the ordinary.

One of their number, more sober than the rest, exclaimed:

"That firing is on board one of the prison ships. I'll bet some of the prisoners have escaped; and if they have, these three are of their number."

This idea found favor in the minds of the other redcoats.

"I'll bet you are right!" cried one. "See, these fellows are soaking wet."

"We mustn't let them get away!" cried still another.

Dick saw that they were in for it.

The redcoats' suspicions were aroused.

They would not be satisfied now unless they detained the youths.

Realizing this, Dick decided to take the bull by the horns.

"At them, boys!" he cried. "Go for them!"

As he spoke, he leaped forward.

Bob and Mark did the same.

All three struck out with all their might.

Their action took the redcoats by surprise.

They would not have believed it possible that three men would dare attack eight or ten.

They realized it now very distinctly, however.

Crack! smack! whack! whack!

Down went several of the redcoats flat upon the sidewalk.

The redcoats had certainly caught some Tartars.

The youths fought fiercely.

They struck out rapidly.

They laid about them with such effect that they soon had succeeded in downing the majority of the redcoats.

"Now, fellows, run for it!" cried Dick. "We must get away from here while we can."

As he spoke he leaped away, up the street.

Mark Morrison followed, instantly.

Bob, however, waited to deal one more blow.

He succeeded in landing the blow.

It struck one of the redcoats fair between the eyes and knocked him down.

The delay proved to be disastrous.

One of the redcoats who had already been downed, succeeded in catching hold of Bob's leg as the youth started to run away.

He hung on tightly.

The result was that Bob was thrown, headlong.

Three or four of the redcoats had just struggled to their feet.

The shock of the blows which they had received and the jar of their fall upon the sidewalk had sobered them considerably.

The redcoats leaped upon Bob.

"Now we've got you!" they cried.

Bob fought desperately.

"Not yet, you haven't!" he grated.

He kicked and struck out fiercely.

The redcoats would have had hard work in handling Bob alone.

But he was not to be left to fight it out alone.

Dick had heard the exclamations and he looked back.

He saw what had happened.

"Come, Mark," he cried, "we must help Bob!"

He whirled around and raced back.

Mark followed, closely.

They reached the scene of the struggle between Bob and the redcoats in a jiffy.

They tore the redcoats loose from Bob and threw them aside as if they had been bundles of straw.

"You scoundrels!" cried Dick. "We'll teach you to interfere; we'll make you wish you had let us alone!"

A crowd was gathering rapidly.

Dick feared that the redcoats might at any moment receive reinforcements.

It would not do to linger long.

The instant Dick and Mark pulled the redcoats off Bob, he leaped to his feet.

Dick seized upon this as the proper moment for them to escape.

"Run, Bob and Mark!" he cried. "We must get away from here."

The three leaped away at the same moment, this time.

They ran with all their might.

"After them!" yelled a redcoat. "They are rebels and have escaped from the prison ship. After them, everybody!"

A big crowd started in pursuit at once.

The youths realized that they would have to do some good running if they were to succeed in escaping.

Dick could have distanced his pursuers, but Bob and Mark had been tied hand and foot so long and so tightly that their ankles were sore and somewhat weakened.

They could not run as fast as they otherwise would have been able to do.

Of course, Dick would not go on and leave them.

Owing to these circumstances the crowd of pursuing redcoats and Tory citizens was enabled to hold its own with the youths.

Indeed, Dick thought their pursuers were gaining slightly.

"This will never do," he thought. "If once that crowd gets hold of us there will be no getting away from them. They are altogether too many for us."

But how were they to help themselves?

That was the question.

"Can't you run faster, boys?" he asked.

"I can't," replied Bob.

"Nor I," said Mark.

"Well, keep on doing the best you can."

Onward raced the youths.

Behind them came the pursuing horde.

By keeping to the darkest streets, the youths bothered their pursuers somewhat and caused them to lose a little time occasionally.

In this manner the three held their own.

Presently the pace of the youths became slower.

They were becoming tired.

They stuck to their work, however.

They realized that their pursuers must also be tired.

"We'll get away from them or die trying," said Dick, grimly.

"That's right," agreed Bob.

"We'll run till we drop," said Mark.

Onward they raced.

Behind them came the redcoats and Tories.

Presently they came to a narrow alley at the middle of a block.

"Quick!" exclaimed Dick; "let's go down this alley and hide. Perhaps they will go on past."

Bob and Mark were willing to do this.

They were almost exhausted.

Their ankles seemed about ready to give way beneath the weight of the youths' bodies.

The youths ran down the alley a distance of thirty or forty yards.

Then they climbed a fence and lay down in a back yard.

Soon they heard their pursuers come opposite the end of the alley.

The youths listened eagerly, intently.

They wondered if their pursuers would pass on by.

This point was soon settled.

The crowd passed by.

The three youths remained where they were until they could no longer hear a sound.

Then they rose, climbed the fence and made their way back up the alley.

When they reached the street they paused and listened.

They could hear nothing.

"I guess we are safe, boys," said Dick.

"It looks like it," said Bob.

"Come," said Dick, "we'll get out of Savannah as quickly as possible."

The three hastened along the street.

They kept a sharp lookout for redcoats.

They succeeded in getting out of the city without encountering any, however.

Leaving the city they struck out in the direction of the "Liberty Boys" camp, three miles up the river.

An hour and a half later they arrived at the encampment.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER THE LAPSE OF A YEAR.

A year has elapsed.

It is now the third day of September, 1779.

During the year just passed the "Liberty Boys" have not been inactive.

They have taken part in a number of campaigns in the South, and have been back North and done good work there.

One thing about the "Liberty Boys," they were always

ready to go anywhere at any time, and at an instant's notice.

It was owing to this fact that they were shifted around so much.

General Washington sent them to wherever they would be able to do the most good.

And now, on this third of September, 1779, we find the "Liberty Boys" in Charleston, South Carolina.

General Benjamin Lincoln was now in command of the patriot forces in the South.

His headquarters were at Charleston.

He had superseded General Robert Howe who had not proven satisfactory as a commander.

Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys" had been in Charleston only a few days.

General Lincoln knew the youths well by reputation, however.

He knew that they had done wonderful work for the cause.

He knew also that Dick Slater was one of the most trustworthy spies and scouts, as well as one of the most successful in the patriot army.

General Lincoln sat in his room in the building in which he had his headquarters.

He was a large, good-natured sort of man.

He did not look as if he would be a successful military man.

He had a very good record, however, he having done good work at Saratoga, in the North.

Presently General Lincoln rang a bell which was by his side on the table beside which he sat.

An orderly entered.

"Go to the quarters occupied by the 'Liberty Boys' and bring Dick Slater, the commander of the company, here," he ordered.

The orderly bowed and withdrew.

Half an hour passed.

Then the orderly opened the door and announced:

"Dick Slater!"

The youth entered.

"Good morning, General Lincoln," said Dick.

"Good morning, Dick."

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Dick, I have some work for you."

"What is it you wish me to do, sir?"

General Lincoln was silent for a few moments.

Then he said:

"You are aware that the French fleet under Count Estaing has arrived off the coast?"

Dick nodded.

"Yes, sir," he replied; "we saw the ships yesterday."

"Yes, the fleet was off Charleston yesterday; and what I wish you to do is to be on watch for the fleet, and when it puts in an appearance again I wish you to go aboard Count Estaing's flagship and take a message."

"Very well, sir; I shall be glad to do so. Have you written the message?"

"No; a verbal message will be all that will be necessary."

"Very good; what do you wish me to say to him?"

"I wish you to say to him that I beg an interview with him."

"Where do you wish the interview to be held?"

"Here, Dick, if he will come; I am such a poor sailor that I do not wish to venture out on the water if I can possibly help it."

"And if Count Estaing will not come here?"

"Then I will go aboard his ship."

"Very well; I suppose you wish him to come at once, if he is willing to come at all?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Very good; then I will return with him."

"Yes, that will be best."

Dick and General Lincoln talked a while longer, and then the youth took his departure.

He made his way down to the water front at once.

He hunted up an old sailor, who owned a fishing smack, and engaged the boat for the day.

He told the old sailor what he wished done, and the man said he would agree to put the youth aboard the French flagship, if the fleet put in an appearance.

Dick went aboard the fishing smack.

He took a seat in the shade and watched for the French fleet, and talked with the old sailor at the same time.

They remained on watch till noon, but the fleet did not put in an appearance.

Dick went ashore and ate lunch.

He was not absent from the vessel more than three-quarters of an hour, but when he returned the old sailor pointed toward the southern horizon.

There was a broad grin on his face.

"Yender's ther fleet, young feller," he said.

Dick looked in the direction indicated.

Sure enough, a score of sails could be seen.

They looked like mere specks against the horizon, but there was no doubt that they were sails.

"How long will it take them to reach here?" asked Dick.

The old sailor pondered a few moments.

"I sh'd say erbout three hours."

The old sailor's estimate of the time proved to be about correct.

It was nearly three o'clock when the fleet arrived opposite Charleston.

The fishing smack put out from shore and headed in such a direction as would head the fleet off.

A signal was hoisted in order that the attention of some one on one of the vessels might be attracted.

The signal was noticed and the fleet hove to.

The fishing smack went alongside the nearest ship.

Fortunately for Dick the old sailor could talk French.

He asked one of the men on board the vessel to point out Count Estaing's flagship.

The man did so.

The fishing smack was at once headed toward the vessel which had been pointed out.

They were soon alongside it.

The fishing smack was made fast to the warship.

Then Dick and the old sailor went aboard.

Dick would need the services of the sailor as interpreter.

They were shown into the cabin of the warship.

They were ushered into the room occupied by Count Estaing.

The count greeted the two, pleasantly and politely.

Then Dick, through his interpreter, the old sailor, delivered General Lincoln's message to Count Estaing.

The count listened attentively and said that he would go ashore and have an interview with General Lincoln.

He said that he was ready to go at once.

Dick and the old sailor went back on board the fishing smack.

They headed toward the shore and were soon back in Charleston harbor.

Count Estaing followed closely in one of the boats from his flagship.

Dick paid the old sailor and then conducted Count Estaing to General Lincoln's headquarters.

General Lincoln and the count shook hands and greeted each other pleasantly.

An interpreter was called in and the two officers proceeded with their interview.

General Lincoln invited Dick to remain.

He did so.

What General Lincoln wished was that his army on the land and Count Estaing's fleet on the water should combine and make an attempt to recapture Savannah, which city was still in possession of the British.

General Lincoln was confident that by working together they could drive the British out of Savannah and regain possession of the city.

Count Estaing listened to General Lincoln's plans with interest.

He was favorably impressed with the idea.

"I am willing to go into the affair," he said. "My fleet shall work in consort with your land force, and, if possible, we will recapture Savannah."

"Don't you think it possible we can do so?" asked Lincoln.

"I do," was the reply. "If I did not think so I would not consent to go into the affair."

The two officers conferred together two or three hours.

They laid their plans in detail.

When at last the interview came to an end, Dick accompanied Count Estaing back to the boat.

Preparations were begun at once.

This took time, however.

General Lincoln called for recruits and it was necessary to wait for the recruits to come.

By the twentieth of September, General Lincoln, believing that he had sufficient force, had moved his army and taken up a position in front of Savannah.

He was joined on shore by a goodly force from Count Estaing's warships.

By the twenty-third all was in readiness.

The siege was begun.

It was vigorously prosecuted.

The advance upon the city was made by a regular system of approaches.

While the patriot soldiers were approaching on land, the French fleet kept up a vigorous bombardment.

The siege was kept up for more than two weeks.

Then Count Estaing became impatient.

He came ashore one afternoon and had an interview with General Lincoln.

"We do not seem to be making much headway," he said.

"No," agreed Lincoln, "we do not seem to have made much headway, still I think if we keep on we will force the redcoats to capitulate, sooner or later."

"That is the trouble," replied Count Estaing. "This harbor is not large enough for my ships, and it is coming time for the autumn gales. If we should be caught by one of the severe storms, for which this coast is noted, the chances are that I would lose a number of my ships; at least, so say my captains, who, of course, know more about the matter than I do."

General Lincoln looked sober.

"You think then you will be unable to assist me in keeping up the siege?"

"I shall be afraid to co-operate with you much longer."

"Well, how much longer, do you think?"

"I should say about one week."

General Lincoln was silent for a few moments.

He looked down at the floor and was evidently in a deep study.

Presently he looked up.

"I'll tell you what we will do," he said, "we will carry on the siege one week longer, and if by that time the British have not capitulated, we will try to take Savannah by storm."

"Very well," said Count Estaing, "that is satisfactory."

"And you will help me storm the city?"

"Assuredly."

"Very well; it is settled. In the meantime, I shall send spies into the city to ascertain the weak spots so that we will know where to make the strongest efforts to enter."

"A good idea; but where will you find any one who will be willing to risk their lives by trying to enter the city?"

General Lincoln smiled.

"I have a number of such men," he said. "Men, did I say? I should have said youths. In my army is a company of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' They are brave and daring. The captain of this company is a youth named Dick Slater—the same youth who boarded your ship off Charleston that time, by the way—and he has earned the reputation of being the champion spy of the Revolution. He has a companion, Bob Estabrook by name, who is almost his equal in shrewdness and daring. I will send these two youths into the city, and if anybody can do the work which I wish done, they can."

"Very well," said Count Estaing, "that will be the best thing to do."

Finally, after all the details had been talked over, Count Estaing took his departure.

General Lincoln sent for Dick and Bob.

He told them what he wished them to do.

The youths listened attentively.

When General Lincoln had finished, he asked:

"Are you boys willing to undertake this work?"

"We are," replied Dick, promptly; "or, at any rate, I am."

"And I," said Bob.

"It will be very dangerous," said General Lincoln. "Have you taken that fact into consideration?"

"The danger cuts no figure in the case, General Lincoln," said Dick. "It is our duty to go, and that settles it."

"That's right," coincided Bob.

"Yes, I think it is right," coincided General Lincoln, "but not every one would look at it in the way that you two do."

"Well, we look at it in that way, and we are ready to go whenever you say the word."

"Good! I say for you to go at your earliest convenience. You know best when you will wish to start. I suppose it will be safer to wait till nightfall before making the attempt to enter the city."

"Yes," replied Dick, "it would be practically impossible to succeed in entering the city in the daytime."

"And now what is it you wish us to do, once we are in the city?"

General Lincoln told them in detail.

They were to find the enemy's weak points and learn where the patriot army could make an attack with a good chance of being successful.

They were to learn, also, as nearly as was possible, the number of men in the British force.

At last, having received all their instructions, the youths left headquarters.

They returned to their own quarters and began making preparations for the work which they were to attempt at night.

Soon after dark the youths, disguised in ragged suits of citizen's clothing, left their quarters and stole forward toward the city of Savannah.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GOOD HIDING PLACE.

It had been a year since Dick and Bob were in Savannah. They had not forgotten the lay of the land, however. They remembered as well as if it had been but yesterday. The youths made their way forward at a fairly rapid pace.

It was quite dark and they had to feel their way, as it were.

Presently they reached the suburbs of the city.

They had to be doubly cautious now.

It would be a difficult matter to enter the city.

It was under siege.

There would be many sentinels.

It would be a difficult matter to get past them.

Dick and Bob, however, were experts at this kind of work.

They did not try to enter the city by way of one of the streets.

They knew better than to do this.

The sentinels would be posted at the ends of the streets.

Turning aside, the youths kept on till they came to a fenced-in block.

They reached it at a point midway between two streets.

They did not think there would be any sentinels here.

They did not take it for granted, however.

They approached, cautiously.

They made just as little noise as possible.

Reaching the fence, the youths paused.

They stood still for a few moments and listened intently.

They did not hear a sound.

"I guess the coast is clear, Bob," whispered Dick. "Let's climb the fence."

"All right," whispered Bob, in reply.

The youths cautiously climbed to the top of the fence.

Just as they were on the point of leaping down on the other side a sharp voice cried:

"Who comes there?"

The youths had stumbled upon a sentinel.

Naturally, they were startled.

They were not at a loss to know how to act, however.

"Forward, Bob!" cried Dick.

With one accord the youths leaped forward.

They did not think there would be more than one sentinel at this point.

They would be able to handle one sentinel easily enough.

As the youths struck the ground they caught sight of the sentinel.

They could just see the outlines of his body.

That was sufficient, however.

It enabled them to locate him.

They leaped forward and seized the fellow.

Dick managed to get the sentinel by the throat.

The redcoat tried to cry out, but the cry died away in a gurgle.

He could not utter a sound after Dick got his fingers on the man's throat.

There might be other sentinels close at hand.

This made it absolutely necessary that the sentinel should be prevented from giving the alarm.

It did not take long to choke the redcoat into insensibility.

Just as this was accomplished, however, the youths heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

They understood what this meant.

Some of the other sentinels had heard their comrade challenge, and not having heard anything since, they were evidently coming to investigate.

"Come," whispered Dick, "we must get away from here."

The youths moved away as rapidly as was possible, and yet not make much noise.

They realized that they were in danger, however.

The other sentinels would quickly find the insensible man.

They would suspect what this meant—that spies from the patriot force were trying to enter the city.

They would give the alarm at once.

Some of them would undoubtedly give chase.

The youths would have hard work escaping.

They had gone but a short distance when yells went up from the point where the insensible redcoat lay.

"They've found him," said Bob.

"That's right," replied Dick. "We'll have to run for it now."

They struck out at increased speed.

They ran across the block and climbed the fence at the other side.

As they reached the street they heard the sound of hurrying footsteps behind them.

Some of the sentinels had given chase.

Dick and Bob ran across the street, leaped the fence and raced across another vacant lot.

Leaping the fence, they turned to the right and darted up the street.

They were forced to do this on account of the fact that there were buildings on the next block, this making it impossible for them to cross it.

Reaching the next street the youths turned to the left and ran in that direction.

They could still hear the sounds of pursuit.

The sentinels were hanging on in a determined manner.

More, they were making a great outcry and were spreading the alarm and getting new recruits constantly.

The chase grew exciting.

The youths, had it been a mere question of speed, would have quickly run away from their pursuers.

The streets were dark, however, and they could not run at their best speed.

They could not go so fast but what the redcoats could keep pace with them.

Presently the youths found that they were getting down toward the business portion of the city.

Here the streets were lighted.

This would be to the disadvantage of the fugitives.

They would attract attention, running along the lighted streets and would soon be halted and captured.

"We mustn't go any farther down into the city, Bob," said Dick.

"What will we do, then, old man?"

"Come this way," said Dick.

As he spoke he turned sharp to the left and darted around a corner.

Bob followed.

The youths had been gradually coming up a slope and

they were now on the top of the highest point of ground within the limits of Savannah.

The youths ran but a few steps when Dick paused, Bob doing likewise.

They were standing in front of a church.

The church door stood partly open.

"Come," whispered Dick.

He tiptoed silently but swiftly up the steps leading to the door.

Bob followed.

Dick looked through the doorway.

The sexton was away up toward the front of the building.

He was dusting the pulpit.

His back was toward the door.

A couple of candles were burning on the pulpit, but the front of the church was in almost total darkness, the candles throwing out not a great deal of light.

Dick took Bob by the arm.

"Come," he whispered. "Step lightly. Don't make any noise."

The youths passed through the open doorway.

They glanced about them.

Over next to the wall, at the right-hand side, was a stairway.

This stairway led to a gallery.

The youths walked across to the stairway and made their way up it.

"This will make a capital hiding place," said Dick, when they had reached the gallery.

Of course, he spoke in a whisper.

"Don't you think there is danger that the redcoats will look for us in here?" asked Bob.

"I hardly think so, Bob. Of course, they might do so."

"Well, we'll soon know, at any rate."

"Yes, they'll be here soon if they are coming at all."

Dick had scarcely finished speaking when the sound of trampling feet was heard.

Some of the redcoats were entering the church.

"Hello, there, sexton!" cried a voice.

"What is wanted?" came the reply.

"We want to ask you a question."

"Who are you, and by what right do you enter here?" came the counter-question from the sexton.

"We are the king's soldiers, and we have been chasing some rebel spies; we thought perhaps they might have entered here."

"No, they have not entered."

"Are you sure?"

"I am."

"I'm glad he is," whispered Bob, gripping Dick's arm.

"They might have slipped in," insisted one of the redcoats.

"No, they could not have done so; still you are at liberty to search if you like."

"Oh, I guess it is hardly worth while. I judge it would be simply a loss of time for no profit."

"I'm glad you think so," remarked Bob, in a whisper.

The sound of retreating footsteps was heard.

"They are going," whispered Dick.

"Yes, and I'm glad of it," from Bob.

The sound of the footsteps soon died away.

The youths decided to remain where they were for a few minutes.

They would give the redcoats time to get well away from the vicinity of the church.

They waited perhaps five minutes.

Then Dick said:

"Let us slip down and out of the church. We will be safe in doing so now, I expect."

At this instant they heard footsteps on the stairs leading up to the gallery.

"The sexton is coming!" whispered Bob. "What shall we do?"

"I don't know," replied Dick; "I don't want him to see us. I should hate to have to hurt him."

"True," agreed Bob, "but he might give the alarm, otherwise."

Suddenly Dick clutched Bob by the arm.

"This way," he whispered; "don't make any noise."

He led the way across the gallery.

At the farther side was a series of steps leading upward to a trap-door in the ceiling.

Dick and Bob hastened up the steps, and, passing through the opening, paused and stood perfectly still.

"Do you think he will come up here?" asked Bob.

"I hardly think so, Bob."

It was dark where they were.

They could not see anything.

They listened to the footsteps of the sexton.

They heard the man moving about in the gallery.

Presently the sound of the footsteps told the youths that the sexton was approaching the point where the steps were.

Suddenly some rays of light shot up through the opening.

The sexton was carrying a candle and it was the light from it that the youths saw.

They stepped back from the opening.

The youths were somewhat alarmed.

If the sexton came up the steps he would be sure to discover them.

He might not come up, however.

Nor did he.

"I guess everything is all right up there," they heard the sexton say. "There is no need of my going up there, nor is there any need of closing the trap door. I will leave it open so as to let some fresh air up there and it won't be so hot and stuffy when I go up to ring the bell."

The youths breathed sighs of relief.

They would not be discovered, after all.

They glanced around them.

They saw that they were in a belfry.

A large bell hung suspended underneath a cross-beam.

There were windows in the belfry, but they were closed.

The sexton moved away.

The youths heard him descend the stairs leading from the gallery down into the church proper.

They made their way slowly and carefully down the steps leading from the belfry and were again in the gallery.

They heard the sexton moving around below for a few moments, and then suddenly the church was plunged in darkness.

The sexton had blown out the lights.

Then there came the loud clang of a heavy door going shut, this being followed by the grating of a key in a lock.

Dick and Bob realized what had occurred, instantly.

They were silent from consternation for a few moments, and then Bob exclaimed:

"Great guns, Dick, the sexton has locked us in the church and gone away!"

CHAPTER IX.

GATHERING INFORMATION.

"You are right, Bob," said Dick. "He has locked us in, sure enough."

"Do you suppose we will be able to get out?"

"I don't know, Bob; we may be able to get out. We'll try, anyway."

The youths hastened downstairs onto the main floor of the church.

It was quite dark, but the youths did not have much difficulty in finding their way to the front door.

As they had anticipated, they found it locked.

"Well, what will we do now, Dick?" asked Bob.

"We'll try the windows, Bob. I guess we will be able to get out that way, all right."

They made their way to one of the windows.

They tried to open the window. It was fastened. Dick got up and felt around, and finally found the fastening. He loosened it and then they had no trouble in opening the window. They climbed through the opening and leaped to the ground. They closed the window, but were unable to fasten it, of course, as the fastening was on the inside. The youths made their way around to the front of the church. They paused and listened. They could hear nothing to indicate the presence of enemies in the vicinity. "I guess the coast is clear," said Dick. "Come, Bob." The two stepped out upon the street and walked away from the church. "Where are you going, Dick?" asked Bob. "Nowhere in particular. I thought we would walk round the street a while, pick up all the information possible and then to-morrow we will make an effort to discover the weak places in the defenses of the city." "Oh, that's your scheme?" The youths put in two or three hours walking about the streets. They gathered as much information as possible by listening to the conversation of the British soldiers. Then they sought a cheap tavern, and, paying in advance for a room, went to bed. They were soon asleep and slept soundly till morning. They ate breakfast and then started out. The work which they had before them was of a dangerous character. In the daytime they would be much more liable to be recognized. Should their identity be discovered they would be hanged or shot at once. The youths were not daunted by the prospect, however. They were there to do their duty, and would do it at all hazards. They made their way hither and thither about the city. They visited the various defenses. They made note of the best points for attack by the patriot forces. The youths virtually took their lives in their hands in doing this. There was the chance that they might be recognized. As they went from one defense to another and had such good luck, the youths got to feeling quite at home.

They began to think that there was very little danger. They put in the entire day at this work. There was only one defense which they had not yet visited by sundown. They decided to finish the affair up. They made their way into this last defense. All day long they had been playing the part of green country youths who were looking around for the purpose of satisfying their curiosity. They were still acting the parts. They had deceived the redcoats nicely, everywhere they had been, so far. They supposed they would be able to do so in this instance as in the others. It happened, however, that there was a British soldier in the defense where they then were who had seen Dick the day he had played the country simpleton when the troops were landing from the ships, a year before. He did not recognize Dick as the same youth who had deceived them at that time, but he remembered that it was just such an appearing fellow who had done so, and he viewed the youths with suspicion. "I believe those fellows are frauds," he told several of the redcoats. "What makes you think so?" asked one. "Oh, the looks of them. I don't believe they are half so green as they pretend." "Oh, I guess you are wrong about that," dissented one; "if they aren't green as grass they are the best actors I ever saw." "Maybe they are acting," the redcoat said. Then he told the circumstance when Dick had deceived them when the troops were landing from the ships a year before. The soldiers did not think there could be any probability that these two young fellows were rebel spies, but they watched the youths closer than they otherwise would have done had not their comrade told them his suspicions. They gathered around the youths and engaged them in conversation. Dick, who was keen-witted and shrewd, had seen the talk among the redcoats and he was suspicious. He believed that there was something in the wind. "I guess Bob and I had better watch our chances and get out of this as quickly as possible," thought Dick. Bob had become suspicious, also. When Dick whispered to him that they must get away from there, he nodded. They sauntered around a while longer and then Dick said:

"Well, Sam, I guess we'd better be goin'. We've got ter go an' git our horses and ride six miles out inter ther country."

They started to walk away, but found themselves confronted by a dozen of the redcoats.

"Hold on," said one, "where are you going?"

"Home," replied Dick.

"Home?"

"Yes."

"Where is your home?"

"Six miles out in ther country."

"Oh, out in the country, eh?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Say, do you know what we think?"

Dick was now anticipating trouble, but he answered, calmly and coolly:

"Nope, I don't know what ye think."

"Well, then, I'll tell you; we think you two fellows are frauds."

"Whut's frauds?" asked Dick, with as simple an expression as possible.

"Frauds are fellows who are not what they pretend to be."

"Then we hain't no frauds; we're just whut we pertend ter be."

The fellow who had first suspected them now spoke.

"That story won't do," he said. "Some of the fellows may believe it, but I don't."

"Ye don't?"

"No."

"Ye mus' be one uv them suspicious sort uv fellers who, not bein' honest therselves, can't believe ennybody else is honest."

The innocence and calmness of Dick's tone as much as the words aroused the redcoat's anger.

"You insolent young puppy," he cried, "I've a good mind to thump your head a bit and learn you some sense."

Dick thought that diversion might be in his and Bob's favor.

By entering into a quarrel with the redcoat, the fact that he and Bob had been accused of being frauds and not what they pretended to be might be lost sight of.

Dick took the redcoat up at once.

"Whut's thet!" exclaimed Dick, in pretended anger. "D'ye darst ter call me er puppy? I tell ye whut et is, ther' hain't nobuddy ez kin talk ter me like thet! Ef ther's enny head-thumpin' bizness ergoin' ter be did aroun' heer, w'y, et'll be your head an' not mine!"

This, of course, made the redcoat more angry than ever.

His comrades laughed and began to guy him, which did not make him feel any better-natured.

"That's the word with the bark on it, Marston," said one.

"The young fellow is game, isn't he?"

"He is, for a fact!"

"I believe he could thrash you, Marston," drawled one of the soldiers.

This speaker was one who did not like Marston, and he said it to worry him and not with any thought that his words might be true.

"I'll show you!" cried Marston, fiercely. "I am going to teach the young fool a lesson which he will not forget in a hurry."

As he spoke, the redcoat advanced toward Dick.

He evidently meant to attack the youth.

Dick was ready for the fellow.

He felt that he would be able to astonish the redcoat, and his comrades as well.

Then, in the excitement which would undoubtedly ensue, he and Bob might be able to get away.

The man addressed as "Marston" began striking at Dick as soon as he was within reach.

He struck rapidly and fiercely, but rather carelessly.

No doubt he thought he would have no difficulty in knocking the supposed country youth around as he pleased.

True, he had told his comrades that he did not believe the youths were what they pretended to be, but in his heart he did not think they were otherwise than country youths.

He was soon to find that he had no easy task ahead of him, however.

To his surprise, none of his blows took effect.

The youth dodged, ducked, evaded and parried, and not a blow landed.

This was a surprise to all of the redcoats, as they were aware that Marston was skilled in the use of his hands in affairs of this kind.

All this time Dick remained on the defensive.

He was waiting for the redcoat to exhaust himself.

Then he would do his work.

This came, presently.

The redcoat, on finding that he had a difficult task in landing upon his nimble antagonist, had become angry and excited, and had gradually exerted himself, more and more.

The result was that he had tired himself greatly.

Presently he dropped his hands.

Instantly Dick took advantage of the opportunity.

He struck out straight from the shoulder.

He struck only one blow.

They were soon back in the encampment of the patriot army.

Dick went to General Lincoln's headquarters at once.

He made his report.

Taking a seat at the general's desk, Dick drew plans of the city's defenses.

He numbered the defenses and gave them distinguishing marks, writing the letter "S" to indicate "strong," and the letter "W" to indicate "weak."

General Lincoln looked the plans over carefully.

He realized that this paper was a very important one.

By its aid he would know just where to make an attack, with the best chance of success.

"You have done splendidly, Dick," said General Lincoln. "If we decide to try to carry the city by storm, these plans which you have drawn will be of the utmost value."

"I am glad you are pleased, sir," said Dick. "If you wish, Bob and I will re-enter the city just before the attempt is made to carry it by storm. We will thus be able to ascertain whether or not any changes have been made in the defenses."

"Very well, Dick, if I should want you boys to enter the city I will let you know."

"Very good, sir."

After some further conversation, Dick withdrew.

The siege was continued four or five days longer.

Then Count Estaing sent word to General Lincoln that he could not keep his ships there much longer.

He said that he could not possibly remain long enough to reduce Savannah by siege, as that would take two or three weeks longer, at least, and the terrible storms incident to this part of the coast were likely to put in an appearance at any moment.

He said that if General Lincoln wished to try to carry Savannah by storm and would make the attempt at once, his fleet would act in concert. Then, whether successful or not, his fleet would have to leave that part of the coast.

General Lincoln decided to try to carry Savannah by storm.

He decided to make the attempt on the following day.

This would be the 9th of October.

He sent word to this effect to Count Estaing, and asked if he would be ready to co-operate with him.

Count Estaing sent back word that he would.

This was satisfactory.

Dick was in the general's headquarters when the message from Count Estaing was brought.

In the message the Count said that a signal should be decided upon so that the moment when the attack was to be made should be known to all who were to take part in

it; then the attack could be made in concert, and it would be much more likely to succeed.

General Lincoln said this was a good idea.

"I don't know what to use as the signal," he said, in a musing tone. "I wish I could think of something."

A thought suddenly struck Dick.

"I'll tell you what would be a splendid signal," the youth said, eagerly.

General Lincoln looked interested.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The clang of a bell."

"The clang of a bell?"

"Yes."

Then Dick went ahead and told General Lincoln the story of how he and Bob had escaped from the redcoats by hiding in the church, and of how they had gone up into the belfry to escape being seen by the sexton, and of how they had seen a large bell up there.

"The church is on the highest point in Savannah," said Dick, "and the clang of the bell could be heard for miles; it would be the best signal in the world."

"I guess you are right," said General Lincoln; "it would be a splendid signal, but who will ring the bell?"

"I will."

Dick's voice was calm but decided.

General Lincoln nodded.

"I expected to hear you say that," he said, "but do you think you can accomplish it?"

Dick nodded.

"I think so; Bob and I penetrated into the city a few days ago and I think we will be able to do so again."

General Lincoln was silent for a few moments.

He seemed to be pondering.

Presently he looked up.

He looked at Dick.

"Very well," he said, "I will assign that duty to you. You will enter Savannah to-night and will take up your position in the belfry of the church; when I have gotten my forces in readiness for the attack, I will make a signal by means of a fire of leaves and boughs; you will be on the lookout and the instant you see the smoke of this fire, you will ring the bell. Do you understand?"

"I do."

"Very good; the attack will be made at the clang of the bell."

"I will take Bob with me, if you have no objections."

"I have no objections, Dick; by all means take him with you."

"I will need him, as one of us will have to watch for your signal while the other stands ready to ring the bell."

It caught the redcoat fair between the eyes.
He went down as if struck by a sledge-hammer.
He struck the ground with a thud.
"Ah-h-h-h-h!"
The redcoats gave utterance to long, drawn-out exclamations of surprise.

"Jove! what a blow."
"That was equal to the kick of an army mule."
"I'm glad it wasn't me he hit."
"Marston has caught a Tartar this time sure."
"He has that!"

Marston was so dazed by the blow, and by the shock of the fall that he did not hear what his comrades said—or if he heard, he did not understand.

He lay on his back, blinking upward at the sky.
"Let's be goin'," said Dick to Bob. "I guess ez how't his feller hez got erbout all he wants fur this time."

Marston had recovered the use of his faculties sufficiently so that he understood what the youth said, and he struggled to a sitting posture.

"Don't you dare leave!" he growled. "I'm going to have revenge for the lick you struck me. Don't let him go, fellows."

"Oh, if yer wants more," said Dick, "I'll stay. I s'posed er hed a-plenty."

"I'll show you whether I have had or not!" cried the redcoat, hoarse with rage. "Just wait, I'll fix you!"

"Oh, I'll wait!"

Dick spoke coolly and calmly.

The redcoat scrambled to his feet.

He stood still for a few moments waiting to get full control of his faculties.

Dick stood still and waited.

Presently the redcoat rushed toward him.

He began striking out, fiercely.

He thought that this time, sure, he would get the better of the supposed country youth.

But do as he would he could not land a blow on the youth that would injure him.

The young fellow was too lively on his feet, and was so skilled in the art of self-defense.

The more the redcoat tried to strike Dick and failed, the angrier he became.

He almost foamed at the mouth.

He gave utterance to curses.

He threatened what he would do.

But he could not do any of the terrible things which he threatened.

Dick waited, as before, until the redcoat had almost exhausted himself and was forced to drop his arms.

Then Dick struck out again.

The blow landed on the point of the redcoat's jaw.

It was a terrible blow.

The redcoat went down with great force.

He was knocked senseless.

"I guess he got ernuff now," drawled Dick. "An' if you uns have no 'bjections, we'll be goin'."

As he spoke, Dick made a gesture to Bob, and they walked rapidly away.

The redcoats had been almost as much dazed as was Marston, and the youths had gone quite a little ways before the fellows seemed to realize what was taking place.

Then they aroused themselves suddenly.

"Wait!" cried one. "Hold on, you mustn't go yet, we want to have a talk with you."

The youths did not stop, however, and this angered the redcoats.

"Halt!" cried the redcoat who had spoken before. "Stop where you are, or we will put bullets through you!"

But the youths did not stop.

CHAPTER X.

"AT THE CLANG OF THE BELL."

Darkness was just coming on.

The light was so dim and uncertain that the redcoats could not get good aim.

It would have been an accident, too, had they hit the youths.

Two or three bullets came close to Dick and Bob, but this did not worry them.

They ran onward as rapidly as possible.

A number of the redcoats uttered shouts and gave chase.

Instead, they leaped forward into a run.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

The youths were very fleet-footed, however.

They soon drew away from their pursuers.

Night comes on quickly in the South.

It was now quite dark.

As the part of the city in which they now were was well out in the suburbs, there were scarcely any lights on the street corners.

This gave the youths a good chance to escape.

They made the most of it.

They ran at top speed and were soon out of sight of their pursuers.

They escaped without difficulty.

"True."

After the matter had been fully talked over, Dick took his departure.

He went at once to Bob and told him what they had to do.

Bob was well pleased.

Such work as this was just to his taste.

He liked to fight, but he liked the work of spying and slipping into the enemy's camp, better still.

Then, too, there was a good chance that there would be something to do in most cases where there was spy work to be done.

The youths made their arrangements that afternoon.

As soon as it was dark they set out toward Savannah.

They had been over the route only a few days before and knew the way well.

They came very near being discovered by the British sentinels, but managed to evade them.

They made their way down into the city proper.

They went into a restaurant—or tavern, more properly speaking—and bought some provisions.

Then they made their way to the church on the hill.

They feared they would have hard work entering the church.

They went to the window through which they had made their escape when they were there before, and tried it.

To their surprise the window was not fastened.

The sexton had not discovered that it had been unfastened.

This was good luck sure.

The youths lost no time in entering the church.

They made their way up into the gallery, and from there, up into the belfry.

They had bought a jug, which they had filled with water from a public well, and they felt that they were well fixed as far as food and water were concerned.

They would have to remain in the church all night, and all next day, and would need considerable in the way of food and drink.

They had brought a small blanket—each youth—and they spread these blankets down on the floor and lay down, and were soon asleep.

They awoke bright and early next morning.

They ate some of the food they had brought, and drank some water, and felt much refreshed.

As soon as it was light they began getting ready for their work.

They opened the windows of the belfry and found that they could get a splendid view of the city.

They could see away into the country, also.

They felt confident that they would have no difficulty in seeing the smoke signal when it should be made by the patriots.

They did not know at what time it would be made, so they would have to keep their eyes open all the time.

Looking seaward, they could see Count Estaing's fleet of warships.

The ships were sailing hither and thither and the youths knew enough about ship manœvering to know that the vessels were getting into position for battle.

The youths watched in the direction of the patriot encampment, closely.

Eight, nine, ten o'clock came and passed, and still the smoke signal had not been seen.

At about a quarter after ten the youths heard a sound as of the church door opening.

"Some one is coming," said Bob, in a low voice.

"The sexton, likely," said Dick.

The youths listened, attentively.

They heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs leading up from the main floor of the church to the gallery.

A few moments later they heard the footsteps in the gallery.

"Jove! I believe he's coming up here, Dick," whispered Bob.

"It doesn't make any difference, Bob, he's only one person."

This last, with a significant intonation.

Bob nodded.

He understood what Dick meant.

The steps sounded almost at the foot of the stairs leading up to the belfry.

If the sexton or whoever the person might be was coming up into the belfry, he would be there very soon.

While talking, Dick had kept a watch out of the window. Suddenly Dick saw the smoke signal.

"Ring the bell, Bob!" he cried, turning quickly toward his companion. "I see the signal!"

As Dick whirled, he saw a man coming up the steps.

The man was bare-headed.

He was evidently the sexton, or bell-ringer.

The man was almost at the top of the steps, in fact, and as his eyes fell upon the youths, he cried, excitedly:

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

At Dick's command, Bob had leaped across and seized the bell-rope.

Ding-dong! Ding-dong! went the deep-toned bell.

As Bob grasped the rope and set the bell clanging, Dick pointed through the window and said to the bewildered bell-ringer:

"Look yonder; that is what we are doing this for!"

As if by magic, instantly following the clang of the bell, hundreds, yes, thousands of blue-coated patriot soldiers were seen charging down upon the British defenses.

At the same instant the French fleet opened fire.

Dick and Bob, watching from the belfry window, saw that some of the outworks had been carried.

For a brief space the stars and stripes were planted there, but they could not be maintained.

The British positions were too strong.

It was a terrible contest while it lasted.

It did not last long, however.

The patriots and their French allies were badly defeated.

They lost more than one thousand men.

The British, so secure had been their positions and so well sheltered, lost but fifty-five.

Count Pulaski was killed and Count Estaing was wounded twice.

The French had suffered really more than the patriots, and after being repulsed, they went back on board the warships and the fleet sailed away.

It had scarcely got rid of the coast, however, when a fierce October gale set in and the ships barely escaped foundering.

The fleet divided, part sailing to the West Indies while the remainder of the ships under Estaing himself sailed back to France.

Dick and Bob, as may well be supposed, were sadly disappointed over the result of the assault on Savannah.

They had done their part, however, so there was nothing to reproach themselves for.

It happened that the sexton of the old church was a patriot, so he did not object to their staying in the church the rest of that day, and he did all he could to assist them to escape when night came.

THE END.

The next number (36) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' DARING WORK; OR, RISKING LIFE FOR LIBERTY'S CAUSE," by Harry Moore.

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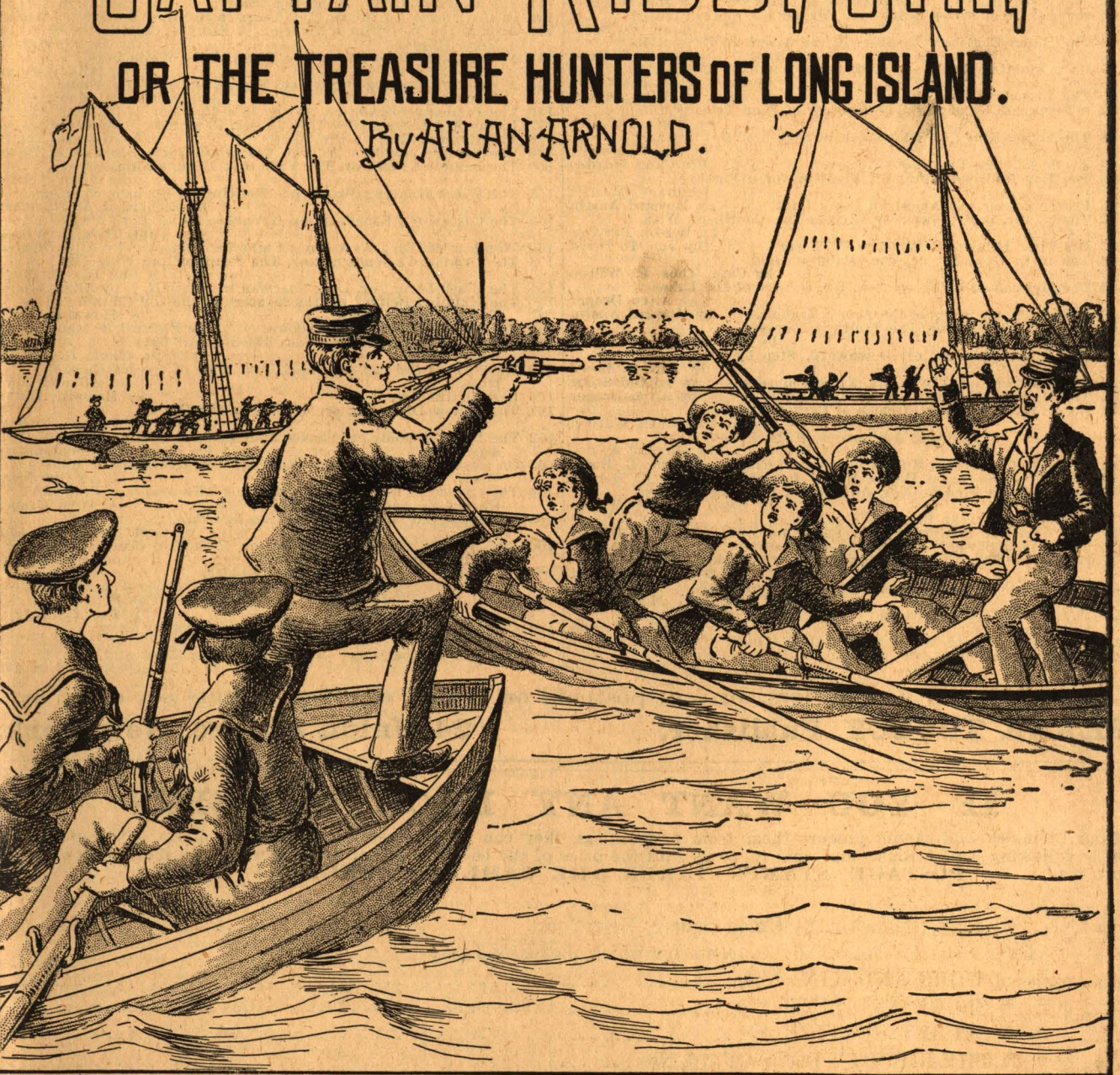
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